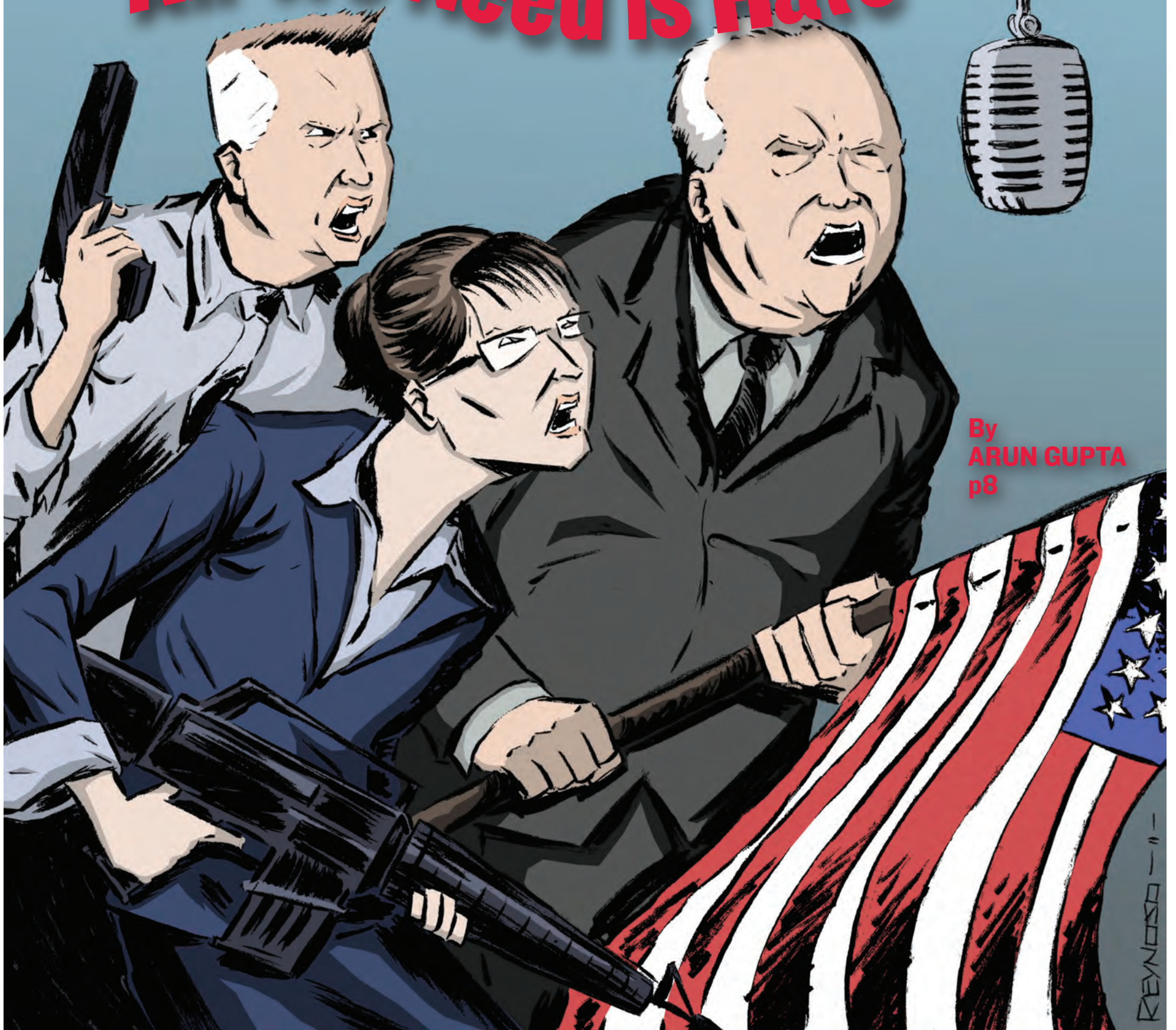


# THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #160, January 19, 2010 - February 15, 2011  
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

## 'All We Need is Hate'



By  
**ARUN GUPTA**  
p8



**THE HISTORY OF A DREAM: A STORY BY NICHOLAS POWERS, PAGE 14**





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*The Indypendent* is a New York-based free newspaper published 16 times a year on Wednesdays for our print and online readership of more than 200,000. It is produced by a network of volunteers who report, write, edit, draw, design, take photos, distribute, fundraise and provide website management. Since 2000, more than 650 journalists, artists and media activists have participated in this project. Winner of more than 50 New York Community Media Alliance awards, *The Indypendent* is funded by subscriptions, reader donations, grants, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising. We accept submissions that look at news and culture through a critical lens, exploring how systems of power — economic, political and social — affect the lives of people locally and globally. *The Indypendent* reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

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# community calendar

PLEASE SEND EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS TO INDYEVENTS@GMAIL.COM.

#### SAT JAN 22

6-9PM • \$10  
CONCERT: THE 2011 WINTER BASH!  
Performers will include the dub-rock trio Faith, indie-soul icon Olu, the artist/activist Earthdriver and bass-legend Doug Wimbish. There will also be organic food, arts and crafts and political organizations present.  
Brooklyn Lyceum, 227 Fourth Ave  
earthdriver@hotmail.com • earthdriver.org

#### SAT JAN 22

7-10pm • \$10 (sliding scale)  
PARTY: ROCK OUT FOR ROE!  
Come celebrate the anniversary of the landmark abortion decision *Roe v. Wade*. Guests include Jessica Valenti and bloggers from Feministing and Jezebel. All proceeds benefit the New York Abortion Access Fund.  
Biddy Early's Pub, 43 Murray St.  
212-252-4757 • nyaaf.org

#### MON JAN 24

6pm • \$25-\$50  
FUNDRAISER: TENNIS TOURNAMENT BENEFITING HOUSING WORKS.  
Join Team Housing Works for an Australian-Open-themed, round-robin doubles tennis tournament. Tickets for spectators are \$25; and a \$50 registration fee is required to play in the tournament. Australian-themed food and drink will be served.  
Roosevelt Island Racquet Club  
281 Main St., Roosevelt Island  
347-473-7400 • housingworks.org

#### WED JAN 26

6-8pm • Free  
LECTURE: PERVERSIVE PREVENTION.  
Come listen to leading Italian legal scholar Tamar Pitch discuss immigration and social control in contemporary Italy.  
Casa Italiana, 24 W 12th St  
212-998-7253 • its.law.nyu.edu

#### WED JAN 26

7pm • \$5 Suggested  
BOOK LAUNCH: *MEXICO'S REVOLUTION THEN AND NOW*.  
Author James D. Cockcroft will discuss his new book, which was written to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first predominantly anti-capitalist revolution in the world. Co-sponsored by *Monthly Review* and *The Indypendent*.

Bluestockings Books, 172 Allen St  
212-777-6028 • bluestockings.org

#### WED FEB 2

\$5-9 • Various times  
EXHIBIT: LUIS CAMNITZER.  
A pioneer of conceptual art, Camnitzer critiques current political realities with a perspective informed by his first-hand experience of dictatorships in Latin America. At the heart of his work is the idea that artists are not first creators of paintings or sculptures, but rather are "primarily ethical beings sifting right from wrong and just from unjust." Exhibition runs through May 29.  
El Museo Del Barrio, 1230 Fifth Ave  
212-831-7272 • elmuseo.org

#### SAT FEB 5

6:30pm • Free  
TALK: WHAT WIKILEAKS EXPOSES ABOUT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.  
This panel will explore the true aims of U.S. foreign policy, including the secret war in Pakistan, the attack on civil liberties and the rise of the U.S. security state. Panelists include Michael Schwartz, author of *War Without End* and Michael Ratner, president of the Center for Constitutional Rights. This event is sponsored by the International Socialist Organization.  
Barnard Hall, Rm 304, 117th and Broadway  
646-452-8662 • internationalsocialist.org

#### SUN FEB 6

12-3pm • Free  
PROTEST: MARCH AGAINST TRADER JOE'S.  
Come rally against Trader Joe's corporate support for sweatshop conditions for their farm workers. Meet at Union Square Trader Joe's and march to Trader Joe's in Chelsea. Organized by Coalition of Immokalee Workers Northeast Encuentro. Trader Joe's Union Square, 142 E 14th St  
farmworkersolidarity@gmail.com  
farmworkersolidarity.blogspot.com

#### SAT FEB 12

8pm • \$20  
PARTY: PICTURE THE HOMELESS VALENTINE'S DAY BASH.  
Get your Valentine's Day partying on early by showing some love to Picture the Homeless. DJ Carlito and DJ Che will be spinning a mix of irresistibly danceable tunes all night.

# JAN—FEB

**FEB 2, 9, 16 & 23 • 7:30 PM**  
WOMEN ON WEDNESDAY ARTS SERIES.  
Sliding scale: \$6/\$10/\$15

**FRI FEB 18 • 7:30 PM**  
BOOK FORUM WITH BARBARA FOLEY:  
*WRESTLING WITH THE LEFT*: RALPH ELLISON AND THE MAKING OF *THE INVISIBLE MAN*.  
Foley sheds new light on Ellison's early radicalism and the relationship between African-American writers and the left during the early years of the cold war.  
Sliding scale: \$6/\$10/\$15

**FRI-SAT FEB 25-26**  
CONFERENCE: THIRD ANNUAL GRASSROOTS FUNDRAISING.  
Whether you are part of a small collective, a medium-sized local non-profit or a national organization, now more than ever we all need to brush up on our grassroots fundraising strategies. Please join us for two exciting days of discussion, workshops and skill shares.  
Sliding scale: \$20/\$30/\$50

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brechtforum.org  
or 212-242-4201

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**THE BRECHT FORUM**

*BUILDING A MOVEMENT THAT MOVES*  
451 West Street (btw Bank and Bethune)

The International Action Center  
55 W 17th St, 5th Fl  
646-314-6423 • picturethehomeless.org

#### SAT FEB 12

7:30pm • Free  
EVENT: VALENTINE'S CABARET AND DANCE PARTY.  
Join Judson Memorial Church for a night of song and camaraderie. Acts include Christine Binder, Micah Bucey, John Cormier and Andy Frantz. Drinks and snacks will be provided.  
Judson Memorial Church  
55 Washington Square South  
212-477-0351 • judson.org

#### TUE FEB 22

7:30pm • \$6/\$10/\$15  
BOOK PARTY: *THE DEVIL'S MILK: A SOCIAL HISTORY OF RUBBER*.  
Join author John Tully for a discussion of his new book, which tells the story of humanity's long encounter with rubber in a kaleidoscopic narrative that regards little as outside its range without losing sight of the commodity in question. Co-sponsored by *Monthly Review* and *The Indypendent*.  
Brecht Forum, 451 West St  
212-242-4201 • brechtforum.org

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## reader comments

#### PAY RAISE

*Response to "Living Wage Battle Spreads Across City," Dec. 15:*

Every other paper in this city is always worrying about what the big corporations and the businessmen say. Of course they think a pay raise for working people is a bad thing! Thanks for telling it like it is.

— BRISCUIT

#### DISCUSSION: THE STATE & SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA

*Responses to "Dancing With the State," Nov. 17:*

I am grateful to Matt Wasserman for taking the time to read and review my book. At the same time, I wanted to clarify a few things.

Post your own comments online at the end of each article or email letters@indypendent.org.



The book focuses on the diverse outcomes of the relationships between movements and states throughout South America. However, Wasserman writes in his review, "Dangl seems loathe to admit that there can be a dialectic, productive relationship between social movements and states...."

Rather than not admitting this, this is a central relationship I focus on in the book. In each of the seven countries examined, and to varying degrees, movements and states participated in such a productive relationship. In some cases the state was an ally, and in some cases grassroots movements used the state, rather than being used by it. There are also many cases of South American leftist presidents turning their backs on movements once taking office.

As for the methodology used to write and research the book, I didn't haphazardly choose interviewees based simply on "who would speak" with me—as Wasserman suggests. Over the course of roughly eight years in South America, I interviewed dozens of activists in social movements, as well as presidents, miners, indigenous lead-

ers, coca farmers, hip-hop artists, academics and politicians. That said, the book is explicitly written from the vantage point of grassroots movements in these countries in an attempt to provide a kind of people's history of the last decade of historic changes in South America.

As for, in Wasserman's words, the "choice between taking state power and turning one's back on the state" being a "false dilemma," I wholeheartedly welcome any debate on the topic, and hope my book adds to the discussion.

— BENJAMIN DANGL, AUTHOR OF *DANCING WITH DYNAMITE*

In his reply, Dangl states that productive relationships between states and social movements are "a central relation  
*Continued on page 10*



# Insecurity Hits Home

TWO COUNTIES IN LOWER HUDSON VALLEY ARE FIRST IN NEW YORK STATE TO JOIN CONTROVERSIAL IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM



The Manhattan skyline as seen from Nordkop Mountain in Rockland County, 30 miles north.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

BY RENÉE FELTZ

There isn't much landscaping work in Rockland County during the winter, so the Jornaleros Project rents space from a church where day laborers can stay indoors, find warm clothes and pass the time taking English classes. During the rest of the year, the project often advises workers on how to deal with employers who refuse to pay them.

"It's a community that's easy to pick on," said Juan Pablo Ramirez, president of the Jornaleros Project and an immigrant from Colombia. Many of the workers he assists are undocumented immigrants from Guatemala.

Ramirez said employers sometimes threaten to call immigration authorities when workers ask to be paid. Now he expects they will just threaten to call the local police.

That's because Rockland County, along with nearby Putnam County, has activated Secure Communities. The controversial immigration enforcement program automatically shares arrest data from local jails with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

"It's going to be even more scary for someone to confront their employer," said Ramirez.

Police in the area insist the program is simply an information-sharing program that will not change how they enforce state

and local laws since the county began participating on Jan. 11.

"It's business as usual," said Captain William McNamara of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office. "We're not interested in profiling or usurping to local government federal immigration laws."

Putnam and Rockland are the first of 62 counties in New York that are expected to activate Secure Communities by 2013, along with the rest of the country. Since it began in 2008, the program has been initiated in 969 counties in 37 states.

The two counties are mostly bedroom communities that lie about 30 miles north of New York City, where resistance to Secure Communities is strong. The NYPD police commissioner has expressed concern about the program, and more than a dozen city council members have asked the state to rescind an agreement it signed with ICE last May that clears the path for its expansion.

"We are particularly concerned for immigrants in counties outside of NYC who are more isolated from groups that are organizing and protecting for immigrant rights," said Michelle Fei, Co-Director of the Immigrant Defense Project and a member of a statewide group focused on stopping Secure Communities.

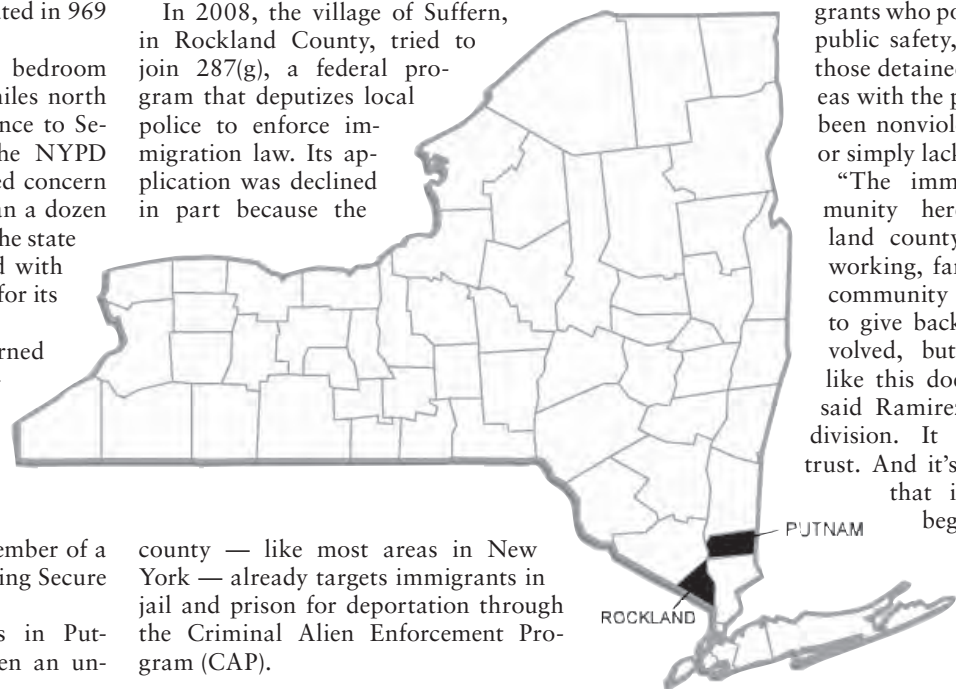
Hostility towards immigrants in Putnam County flared in 2009 when an un-

documented immigrant killed a mother and daughter during a drunk driving accident in the Village of Brewster. After the incident, violent language appeared in comments posted to a local message board.

"I volunteer to feed this piece of garbage into a wood chipper alive with his hands taped to his ankles," read one comment. "These animals must be dealt with. If the government does not do something, someone will."

In 2008, the village of Suffern, in Rockland County, tried to join 287(g), a federal program that deputizes local police to enforce immigration law. Its application was declined in part because the

county — like most areas in New York — already targets immigrants in jail and prison for deportation through the Criminal Alien Enforcement Program (CAP).



In Putnam County, the Sheriff said he has used CAP to report at least 500 "criminal aliens" to ICE after they gave a foreign country of birth during the booking process.

But the addition of Secure Communities to the county's law enforcement tool box has caught many residents off guard.

"We were disturbed by the lack of transparency," said Betsy Palmieri, a long-time member of the Hudson Valley Community Coalition. She said the program was activated without any chance for public input.

Advocates say immigrants who fear that any interaction with police would result in their information being shared with ICE are less likely to report crimes.

"Our taxes pay for the police department," said Palmieri, "but we're not consulted on programs like this that do not make us feel more secure."

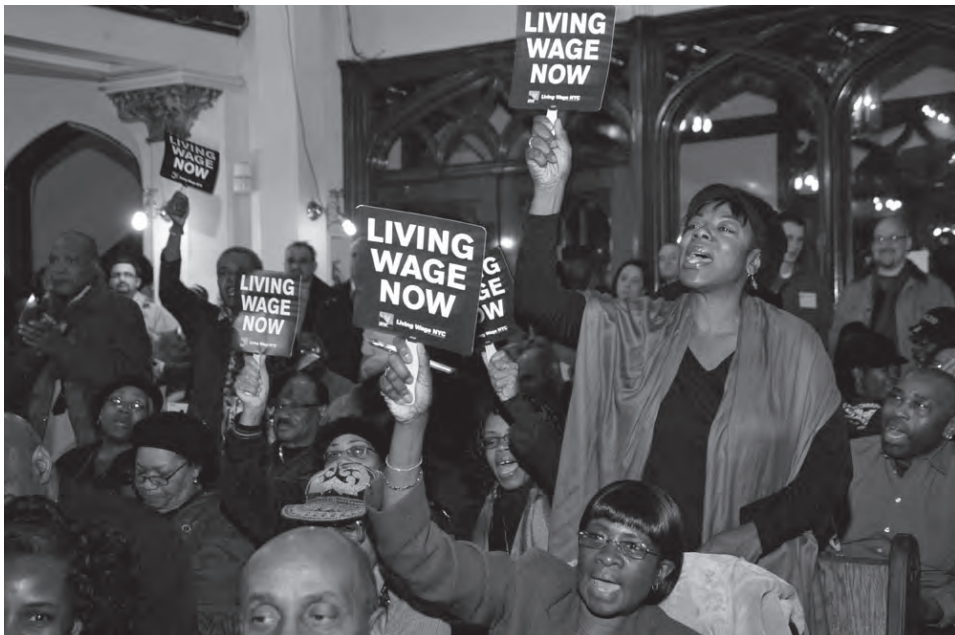
An ICE spokesman said the number of people transferred to their custody from the two new counties won't be tallied until the end of January. He said he did not know which New York counties would be next to join.

Palmieri and Ramirez said they plan to begin holding workshops for immigrants on what to do when they are stopped by police. Ramirez said Secure Communities has

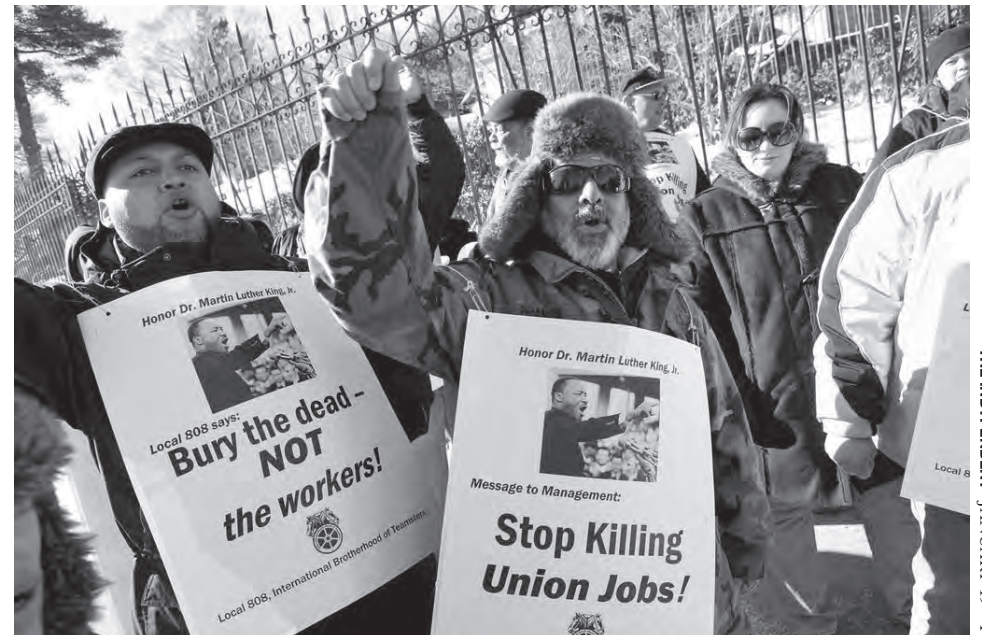
a mandate to target immigrants who pose a threat to public safety, but most of those detained in other areas with the program have been nonviolent offenders or simply lack legal status.

"The immigrant community here in Rockland county is a hard-working, family-oriented community who wants to give back and get involved, but a program like this does not help," said Ramirez. "It causes division. It causes mistrust. And it's unfortunate that it's going to begin here."

## The Living Fight for Themselves



**WAGING A STRUGGLE:** Living Wage supporters kick off Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend with a spirited Jan. 13 interfaith service held at the Convent Avenue Baptist Church in Harlem. The service, which drew more than 1,000 labor and community activists, was held to rally support for the Fair Wages for New Yorkers Act, which would require employers that receive major public tax subsidies to pay employees at least \$10 per hour with benefits, or \$11.50 without. The living wage legislation currently has 29 City Council co-sponsors. PHOTO: GARY SCHOICHET



**BATTLE IN THE BRONX:** Woodlawn Cemetery workers and their supporters rallied Jan. 17 to protest layoffs that occurred after the workers joined Teamsters Local 808. Landscaping jobs at the 400-acre cemetery in the northern Bronx have been outsourced to The Brickman Group, a company notorious for exploiting immigrant laborers. Workers, religious leaders and activists expressed concern that this will set a precedent for attacking the wages, healthcare and pensions of cemetery workers across the city. PHOTO: ANDREW STERN



# Data Dump

## NEW SYSTEM TO EVALUATE TEACHERS PROMOTES CHEATING AND UNDERMINES LEARNING

By NORM SCOTT

Should firemen be held accountable when a building burns down? Should individual soldiers in Afghanistan be compared to each other on the basis of “success” or “failure” in controlling the Taliban in a given area?

Any effort to do so would spark a major outcry. But when it comes to teaching, there is a different standard.

On Jan. 10, Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Cynthia Kern ruled that the New York City Department of Education (DOE) was obliged to release the names of individual teachers with “value-added” test score results that purport to measure teacher effectiveness. Judge Kern brushed aside arguments by the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) that the release of unreliable data would unjustly harm teachers’ reputations writing “there is no requirement that data be reliable for it to be disclosed.”

The value-added methodology attempts to measure teachers according to how much their students scores on standardized tests improve or decline year to year.

The data dump will affect more than 12,000 classroom educators in Grades 4 to 8. The UFT is expected to appeal. There is some irony here, as the UFT signed off on the use of value-added scores in the first place after former Schools Chancellor Joel Klein promised the results would not be made public.

### FEEDING FRENZY

If the value-added data is ultimately released, expect a feeding frenzy as teachers are judged and shamed on an individual basis in the media. The larger purpose of such a data dump by the DOE is to further erode public support for teachers and force their union to renounce a seniority-based system, just as Mayor Michael Bloomberg and his new Schools Chancellor Cathie Black are preparing to lay off thousands of teachers due to budget shortfalls.

Ironically, it was only six months ago that the state Department of Education revealed that years of test-score advances by city students had turned out to be a mirage, causing Bloomberg and Klein a good deal of embarrassment. No matter — the mayor is ready once again to wield unreliable test scores as a political weapon, and most media in this city have deliberately short memories.

Backing for this initiative has been provided by private foundations led by billionaires like Bill Gates and Eli Broad, who assert that data-driven models from the private sector can be transferred to public schools.

### DATA DREAMS

Their dream of using data to accurately measure the effectiveness of individual teachers is rooted in a vision of the school as a factory in which teachers are assembly-line workers and rising student test scores equal rising workforce productivity. At long last, value-added supporters claim, good teachers will be rewarded and the poor ones forced to improve for fear of losing their jobs.

In reality, value-added measures are seriously flawed. They don’t fully account for external circumstances, such as poverty or family turmoil, that can affect a child’s performance. Nor can they account for the fact the same child can take tests on different occasions and under different conditions and the results will differ.

A study by Mathematica Policy Research done for the U.S. Department of Education showed that one-fourth of average teachers will be mistakenly identified for special rewards. At the same time, one-fourth of teachers who differ from average performance by three to four months of student learning will be overlooked.

A recent study by Sean Corcoran of NYU demonstrated that the New York City teacher data reports have an average margin of error of 34 to 61 percentage points out of 100. The National Academy of Sciences has also warned of the potentially damaging consequences of implementing these unfair and inherently unreliable evaluation systems. Even the NYC DOE’s own consultants have warned against using data for teacher evaluation.

### PERVERSE INCENTIVES

Value-added measures also provide incentives for teachers to manipulate scores by using large amounts of classroom time practicing for tests or by cheating. To the extent a teacher cuts corners one year to deliver improved test scores, a student’s next teacher will face that much greater of a challenge to deliver similar or better results.

With their very livelihoods threatened, teachers will be very careful about working with troubled children who could drag down their value-added ratings. A veteran New York City teacher who blogs under the alias of “Accountable Talk” described dealing with a request to take a class full of difficult students:

“I did something I am still not proud of. I quit,” Accountable Talk wrote. “No, I didn’t quit teaching. I just quit volunteering to teach the very children who needed me most. When my AP [assistant principal] asked me to take them on again (which he would not do unless he knew I’d been successful), I said no. This year, those kids are



with another teacher who has difficulty just getting them to sit in their seats.”

One of the political goals of the value-added approach is to break teacher unity by pitting them against each other. The competitive, zero-sum logic of the value-added system undermines the spirit of collaboration that is essential to teachers refining and developing their craft. If sharing tips with one’s fellow teachers will help them improve their value-added rankings, is it prudent to reach out to individuals with whom you are competing?

The downside of a value-added approach doesn’t faze leading proponents like Eric Hanushek, a Stanford economist who has written that teachers’ scores should be made public even if they are flawed.

Several news organizations, including the *New York Post*, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, have filed Freedom of Information requests for New York City teacher test-score data. The normally secretive NYC DOE has been eager to comply.

Still, it would be wise to remember that not everything that counts can be measured, and not everything that can be measured counts.

*Norm Scott worked in the New York City public school system from 1967 to 2002. He publishes commentary about current issues in New York City public education at ednotesonline.blogspot.com.*

## Opposing School Closings

Public hearings are taking place across the city this month at 26 schools targeted for closure by the city. Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s hand-picked school board, the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP), will vote on the proposed closings when it meets on Feb. 1 and 3 at 6 pm. According to the Department of Education, the schools are being closed due to poor performance. Opponents of the closings say their schools have

been set up to fail and should receive more support. Both PEP meetings will be held at Brooklyn Tech High School at 29 Fort Greene Place. For more, see [grassrootseducationmovement.blogspot.com](http://grassrootseducationmovement.blogspot.com). Here are some upcoming hearings:

### JANUARY 24

P.S. 114 Ryder Elementary  
1077 Remsen Ave.  
Canarsie, Brooklyn

### M.S. 571

80 Underhill Ave.  
Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn

### JANUARY 25

P.S. 260 Breuckelen  
875 Williams Ave.  
Canarsie, Brooklyn

### JANUARY 26

I.S. 195 Roberto Clemente  
625 W. 133rd St.  
Harlem

### I.S. 231 Magnetech 2000

145-00 Springfield Blvd.  
Rochdale, Queens

### JANUARY 27

P.S. 030 Hernandez/Hughes  
144-176 East 128 St.  
Harlem

### JANUARY 28

John F. Kennedy High School  
99 Terrace View Ave.  
Marble Hill, Bronx

## Save the Date

*The Ad Hoc Committee to Stop School Closings & Charter Takeovers will be holding a citywide rally on Thursday, Jan. 27, at 4:30 pm at City Hall Plaza near the Brooklyn Bridge. For more, see [stopschoolclosings.wordpress.com](http://stopschoolclosings.wordpress.com).*



## Separate is Not Equal

**SPEAKING OUT:** A student at the Secondary School for Research (SSFR), testifies during a Jan. 11 public hearing on plans announced by the city Department of Education to establish a new selective high school inside the John Jay campus building in Park Slope. SSFR and two other schools that share the building criticized the Education Department’s support for Millennium 2 High School, which will receive extra funding from outside sources. The schools already inside the building face continuing budget cuts. The DOE is looking to carry out similar school co-locations at as many as 30 campuses this year. PHOTO: ANDREW STERN



# The Gropes of Wrath

BY ANN SCHNEIDER

While the initial backlash against the use of full-body scanners in airports has faded, the decision by a Washington, D.C. federal judge in January to allow the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to refrain from releasing more than 2,000 scanned body images to a civil liberties group has brought the issue back into focus.

The request was part of a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit filed in 2009 by the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC), which described the use of body scanners as “unlawful, invasive and ineffective.” EPIC has already obtained and made public federal documents that describe how body-scanner equipment can store, record and transmit images.

The court's decision in favor of DHS is just one more instance of the United States' misguided efforts to prevent terrorist attacks. Instead of addressing the root causes of these acts, it seems we are doomed to growing encroachments on our right to travel. Worse, in lieu of requiring an individualized suspicion to justify a bodily search in accord with the Fourth Amendment, our efforts to stomp out terrorism seem certain to spill over into racial profiling.

The court's support of body scanners and pat-downs in airports will depend on whether or not the searches serve a “special need” and are minimally intrusive compared to this need. Normally, the police need a warrant that is grounded in particularized suspicion, but the special-need exception allows the government to proceed without such proof. One example of this would be DUI checkpoints on highways.

The special-needs exception was established by the U.S. Supreme Court decision in the 1984 case *New Jersey v. T.L.O.*, which upheld a high school's warrantless search of a teenager's purse for contraband after she was caught smoking. But in 2009, the high court ruled that this concern doesn't justify a student's strip search (*Safford Unified School District v. Redding*), so at least some of the justices would probably not like to see adults forced to appear virtually naked as they step through backscatter machines at airports.

Though the issue of airport screenings has never reached the Supreme Court, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in California has ruled that such searches must be limited to weapons and explosives. When Samuel Alito was on the Third Circuit, he approved the use of hand-held metal detectors only after a passenger set off an alarm in a magnetometer.



Whether backscatter machines are, in fact, minimally intrusive and effective for the purpose of preventing a terrorist attack remains to be seen.

## SEARCHES FROM THE UNDERGROUND

Meanwhile, in New York City, suspicionless subway searches have been permissible since 2005.

In *MacWade v. Kelly*, the New York Civil Liberties Union challenged the New York Police Department over the constitutionality of bag searches, arguing that they were too infrequent and haphazard to be effective and violated commuters' Fourth Amendment rights.

In his ruling on the case, U.S. District Judge Richard Berman stated that searches may be a reasonable precaution against “a substantial risk” of terror attacks at subway stations, airports, courts and government buildings, regardless of whether it is the most effective measure.

In 2009, the NYCLU brought another suit against the NYPD, *Sultan v. Kelly, et al.*, this time on behalf of a 32-year-old native New Yorker of South Asian descent who had been stopped and searched at subway entrances 21 times in the four years of the supposedly “random” program. The suit maintained that flaws in the checkpoint program resulted in racial profiling. What is most revealing is the city's response to the lawsuit. The plaintiff offered to forgo monetary damages if the city would simply agree to monitor and supervise subway checkpoints to ensure racial profiling did not occur. The city rejected this offer, twice.

Apparently it preferred to pay damages — using taxpayer money — of \$10,000.

The most disturbing part of this trend is the Second Circuit's ruling that a traveler's right to privacy is secondary to the government's efforts to protect public safety. Judge Berman's comment in his 2005 ruling that he would support the use of body-scanner machines and pat-downs in government buildings is equally troubling.

The fact that the scanners cannot detect plastic explosives concealed by body parts is one reason EPIC urges the courts to ban their use on principle. But perhaps the hysterical claims that body scanners are “government child pornography” will have more impact. As Mark Twain said, “the s'preme court follows the 'lection returns.”

*Ann Schneider is a member of the NYC Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild (nlgny.org). The opinions expressed in this article are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the position of the organization as a whole.*

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**Bronxnet Channel 67**  
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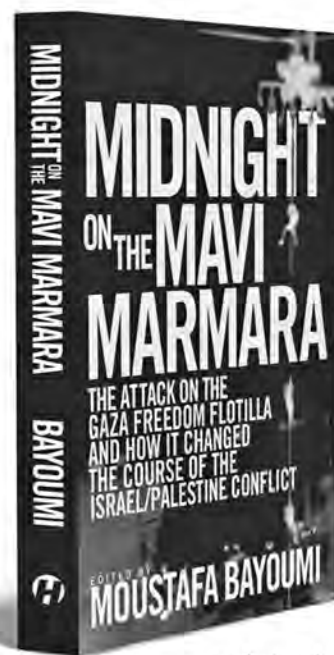
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## MIDNIGHT ON THE MAVI MARMARA

The Attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla and How it Changed the Course of the Israel/Palestine Conflict, \$16

At 4:30 am on May 31, 2010, Israeli commandos attacked the Gaza Freedom Flotilla as it sailed through international waters

to bring humanitarian relief to the beleaguered Palestinians of Gaza. Within minutes, nine peace activists were dead, shot by the Israelis.

In these pages, a range of activists, journalists, and analysts piece together the events that occurred that night. Mixing together first-hand testimony and documentary record with hard-headed analysis and historical overview, *Midnight on the Mavi Marmara* reveals why the attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla may just turn out to be Israel's Selma, Alabama moment: the beginning of the end for an apartheid Palestine.

Contributors include: Ali Abunimah, Omar Barghouti, Noam Chomsky, Martha B. Cohen, Juan Cole, Neve Gordon, Glenn Greenwald, Arun Gupta, Amira Hass, Rashid Khalidi, Stephen Kinzer, Paul Larudee, Iara Lee, Gideon Levy, Alia Malek, Henning Mankell, Mike Marqusee, Lubna Masarwa, Yousef Munayyer, Kevin Ovenden, Ilan Pappé, Sara Roy, Alice Walker, Haneen Zoabi, and many more.

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# The United States of Austerity

By Max Fraad Wolff

During the recent economic crisis, local government finances have taken an epic battering. The financial condition in our 50 states, 3,000 counties and 36,000 municipalities is severe. State and local governments employ almost 10 percent of the U.S. workforce and have been laying off folks at a brisk clip. Contraction in government hiring, spending and service provision threatens to lower economic growth, reduce quality of life and increase inequality of income and opportunity. We are early into a decentralized, local austerity program similar to events in the Euro Zone.

From 2003 to 2007 states were the beneficiaries of growing revenues from booming construction, housing markets and retail spending. They spent at a fairly high clip and taxed at relatively low rates. As the recession began in late 2007, demand for state services — direct and through aid to localities — increased sharply. State governments continue to face record demands for services, and have unfunded health and pension liabilities that run into many hundreds of billions of dollars.

Shrinking personal and corporate income tax receipts and sales tax revenues since 2007 have created one of the largest declines in income for state governments in modern history. Many states have been getting by through federal assistance and issuing federally subsidized Build America Bonds. With these two measures trailing off in 2011, there will be widespread and long-term deficits in most states. This year, states face more than \$110 billion in budget shortfalls.

Localities rely on state assistance for nearly one in every three dollars that they spend. They depend heavily on property taxes for income — and in some cases sales taxes. Housing is in the worst crisis in living memory, and the average house price has plunged more than 25 percent since 2006. The massive decline in property values will begin to pressure already stretched local and municipal budgets. Because property is reassessed every few years, it takes several years for falling property prices to show up in declining revenue. State aid to localities will decline as federal stimulus funds trickle off this year, compounding the states' dire finances.

Local areas spend more than half their budgets on education and social services, which are increasingly squeezed. Like states, most municipalities have a fiscal year that begins in July. We can expect battles over wages, benefits and employment levels to heat up this spring. Massive pressure to lower costs and employment at the state and local level are here and are likely to intensify.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, local governments have cut spending by 2 percent and reduced their workforces by 241,000 since the start of the recession. As payrolls are cut, service provision will likely decrease despite continued high demand. This will stress public education, fire and police departments, infrastructure and many other services.

Reductions in state and local spending and employment will hobble economic growth. Reduced growth is likely to acutely affect lower-income populations. Cuts in progressive and graduated federal income taxes, estate taxes and capital gains taxes reduce the burden on the most affluent. Rising property and sales taxes, and declining services at the state and local level are regressive. Taxes that land hard on lower and middle-income households will rise and services to these households will fall.

The bipartisan federal tax bill reduces income

*Continued on page 12*



PHOTO: Saebaryo/flickr.com

## FISCAL REALITY

### Real Solutions for New York's Budget Crisis

Gov. Andrew Cuomo

By James Parrott

With the slow recovery from the Great Recession of 2008–2009, New York State's budget situation remains precarious.

Most states are in a similar position, since their revenues have dropped more than at any time since the Great Depression of the 1930s. State tax collections, adjusted for inflation, are still 12 percent below pre-recession levels while the need for state-funded services has grown. At least 46 states struggled in 2010 to close budget shortfalls. There is no let-up in sight. Federal fiscal relief to the states has greatly diminished, and most of it is scheduled to end in mid-2011.

New York State's revenues are projected to grow by 5 percent in the coming budget year, but the winding down of federal fiscal relief will cost it more than \$5 billion, mainly in the areas of Medicaid and K-12 education. Fiscal relief to the states is still urgently needed — yet in August the Democratic-controlled Congress could only muster a modest six-month extension (through the first half of 2011) of increased Medicaid assistance.

Medicaid costs borne by New York are also climbing in next year's budget because one million New Yorkers lost employer-provided health insurance in the recession — and many of those people are turning to Medicaid as a last resort.

The pace of the national recovery is slow-

er than it should be, partly because the continuing pressure on state budgets is forcing states to cut spending and/or increase taxes. Already, the loss of state and local government jobs is a major drag on the tepid recovery, and the relative decline in such jobs is much greater in New York than for the nation as a whole.

#### RESENTMENT

There is tremendous public resentment over the causes of the economic crisis. The recession was clearly the result of Wall Street's excesses, yet conservatives have succeeded in deflecting the focus of public animosity to government. Republicans rode the tsunami of economic anxiety and insecurity to victory at the polls, even though they lack any realistic strategy to boost the recovery and reduce unemployment. Now they claim a mandate to reduce government, at all levels, at all costs. Cutting government will exacerbate unemployment and retard the recovery — but for Republican leaders that doesn't matter, because they believe a still-weak economy in 2012 will lead voters to deny President Obama a second term.

Conservatives have also succeeded in channeling popular resentment against public-sector workers, claiming that their benefits are too high and their compensation now exceeds that of comparable private-sector workers. However, when pay and benefit comparisons are done accurately — by adjusting for the higher levels of education and

higher average age of public-sector workers — New York's government workers are compensated pretty much in line with their private-sector counterparts.

Attacks on public pension funds never mention the tremendous stock market losses pension funds suffered during the financial crash, which were certainly not caused by public employees. Not surprisingly, these attacks often come from political forces who supported corporate raids on private-sector pensions over the last generation, and who are now seeking cuts in Social Security benefits. It's an agenda that is harmful to the retirement security of all Americans.

New York needs a balanced approach to balancing its budget. Slashing essential public services or scapegoating public-sector workers isn't the answer. Other major interests, particularly Wall Street, big business and New York's ever-richer elite, must participate in the solution.

#### WINDFALL PROFITS

Following the September 2008 financial meltdown, Wall Street firms bounced back sooner than anyone anticipated. Wall Street profits and bonuses in 2010 likely won't match 2009's record levels, but they will still be far better than in any other part of the economy. In this weak economy, Wall Street handily makes money because of the Federal Reserve's low interest rate policy — a

*Continued on page 12*

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# With Rent Laws Expiring, Tenants Need Militancy

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

New York State's rent laws are set to expire June 15. If the legislature renews them without strengthening them, the number of apartments with regulated rents and protections against eviction will continue to erode. If the legislature weakens the rent laws again, as it did when it renewed them in 1997 and 2003, the city will lose affordable housing at an even faster rate.

The tenant movement needs new tactics and strategy. Lobbying the state Senate, its main strategy over the last two years, has failed. Even with a Democratic majority, one that tenants organized and campaigned hard for, the Senate blocked almost the entire tenant agenda. This included the repeal of the 1997 vacancy-decontrol law, which deregulates vacant apartments that rent for more than \$2,000 a month, and of the 1971 Urstadt Law, which bars New York City from enacting rent laws stronger than the state's.

Tenants had believed that Republican control of the upper house was the biggest barrier to strengthening the rent laws, but their efforts were thwarted by corrupt Democrats like the now-indicted Pedro Espada, Jr. and a larger faction that did not want to alienate its real estate financiers. With the Republicans back in power, the Senate will be even less receptive to tenant concerns. It is likely that the real estate lobby will push for further weakening of the laws, such as overturning the court-imposed ban on deregulating apartments that get tax breaks intended for rent-stabilized buildings.

One possibility is that other legislative bodies could get more militant about defending tenants. Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver has said that renewing and strengthening the rent laws is essential. What if the Assembly refused to pass the state budget until the rent laws were renewed? Yes, the political establishment would hammer them for "holding the state hostage to special interests," but the alternative is letting real estate multimillionaires buy laws that let them gouge city renters.

Would Silver and the Assembly Democrats be willing to stand up? They have suggested that they may not pass Gov. Cuomo's proposed property tax cap unless the Senate renews the rent laws and repeals vacancy decontrol. However, only the most naïve would count on them sticking to it.

Cuomo says he opposes linking the two issues, which indicates that he is willing to see any strengthening of rent regulations die in the Senate. He has avoided discussing rent controls, except for vague platitudes about the need to balance tenant protections with a stable real estate market. Real estate interests were the largest single bloc that funded his \$34 million campaign. His apparent belief that New York's worst problems are high taxes, a strong teachers' union and government workers' pensions does not inspire much confidence either.

What if the City Council passed an emergency rent-control law to protect tenants in case the state laws expired? That might run afoul of the Urstadt Law, but it could be a backup plan if the Senate refuses to renew the laws without weakening amendments. However, Council Speaker

Christine Quinn has never been a particularly militant defender of tenants.

The second possibility is more intense direct action by tenants and their supporters. The most successful civil disobedience in American history has disrupted actual sources of oppression, whether it be 1960s college students sitting in at lunch counters that refused to serve black people or General Motors workers occupying factories in the great sit-down strikes of 1937. Previous civil disobedience by tenant activists has been symbolic and ineffective. The 1997 sit-in outside then-Gov. George Pataki's Manhattan office, which was held just a few days before the legislature imposed vacancy decontrol, disrupted nothing but traffic on Third Avenue.

In the 1930s, New Yorkers resisted evictions by having protesters force their way back into the evicted family's home and put their possessions back. If tenants respond to continued rent increases with rent strikes, that kind of self-defense will be essential.

The times call for militancy. In many ways, our government is no longer a functioning democracy, but a vending machine for the wealthy special interests that fund political campaigns. This is particularly true in New York, where real estate interests give politicians more money than any other business does. State legislators have even said that they don't want to repeal the Urstadt Law because then landlords would give money to the City Council instead!



Rent control activists demand senators pass rent law reforms at a July rally at City Hall. CREDIT: WEST SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ALLIANCE

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# Hate

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fondly remembering the Citizens Councils, which were the white-collar Klan in the 1950s. Rush Limbaugh downplaying the genocide of Native Americans asking, where are the white man’s reparations for being introduced to tobacco? Glenn Beck invoking the internment of Japanese-Americans in warning that Muslims will be put behind “razor wire” if they aren’t “the first ones in the recruitment office lining up to shoot the bad Muslims in the head.” And Republican governors issuing proclamations marking April as “Confederate History Month” while declining to mention slavery, the sole cause of the Civil War. The right’s denial of atrocities over hundreds of years of history is matched by its denial of the political violence over the last two.  
The eliminationist rhetoric is made real within a culture that glorifies guns. Need we be reminded how gun stores reported a doubling or tripling of sales right after

Obama’s 2008 election?  
The right-wing violence that followed was easily predictable. The Department of Homeland Security’s April 2009 rather tepid report on “Right-Wing Extremism” described how the threat of “violent attacks” was increasing due to “the prolonged economic downturn,” “the election of the first African American president,” the possibility of firearms restrictions and the recruitment of returning military vets by right-wing extremists.  
The report, which DHS quickly retracted under pressure from the right, concluded “lone wolf extremists” in particular posed a grave danger and came chillingly true with at least four separate cases of political murders from April to July of 2009. These killings were an overture to the town-hall rage during the healthcare debate in the summer of 2009 and occurred as the Secret Service was overwhelmed by nearly 1,000 death threats a month against Obama.

There is a third reason why the Arizona massacre should be a wake-up call. The right’s response showcases the shopworn tactics it uses to avoid responsibility. Top of the list is for politicians to declaim cultivating an atmosphere of violence. Palin’s crosshairs on Giffords were just “a surveyor’s symbol,” and don’t mention her “Don’t Retreat, Instead — RELOAD!” tweet following passage of the healthcare bill last March and the subsequent rash of violence and threats against at least four of Palin’s targets, including Giffords. Ignore how Giffords’ opponent staged a “target for victory” campaign event to “remove” her from office while offering constituents a chance to fire a “fully automatic M16.” Conveniently forget about Michele Bachmann telling her constituents to be “armed and dangerous,” Michael Steele calling for Nancy Pelosi to be put on the “firing line,” Sharron Angle suggesting “Second Amendment remedies.”

Another tactic is to obfuscate how the perpetrators of violence are tied to the right by painting them as leftists no matter how thin the evidence. If that doesn’t work try playing the victim, such as Erick Erickson did, by writing that “by perpetuating the lie ... that the right and the Tea Party incited this evil act, the left and media may very well incite violence against the right.” Claim the alleged killer was “a disturbed individual whose act cannot be explained by relating it to politics or any rational motive.” If all else fails, decry “the politicization of tragedy.”  
If anything, the tragedy was the result of the reactionary right’s politics of demonizing the other. The time has come to attack the right, not with guns, but with words and ideas to expose its destructive and deadly politics for what it is.

# Letters

*continued from page 2*  
ship” that he focuses on in Dancing with Dynamite. This is somewhat misleading, given that a leitmotif of his book is the betrayal of social movements by putatively progressive politicians.  
In the introduction to his book, Dangl claims, “the state and governing party is, by its nature, a hegemonic force that generally aims to subsume, weaken or eliminate

other movements and political forces that contest its power.” Rather than being truly open to the possibility of a productive, dialectical relationship between states and social movements, Dangl’s very definition of the state forecloses upon this possibility. In his conclusion, he even describes the lessons for US activists from the engagement of South American social movements with

the state as lessons in “cooptation, demobilization, opportunism and repression.”  
As for the question of methodology, what I was alluding to when I stated that Dangl apparently chose his interview subjects based on who would speak to him is that he gave no explanation of how he chose his interview subjects. Dangl’s defense of his methodology is telling: it boils down to

the statement that he interviewed a bunch of people from various walks of life. Rather than undercutting the claim that his choice of interviewees was haphazard, his reply reinforces it.  
— MATT WASSERMAN

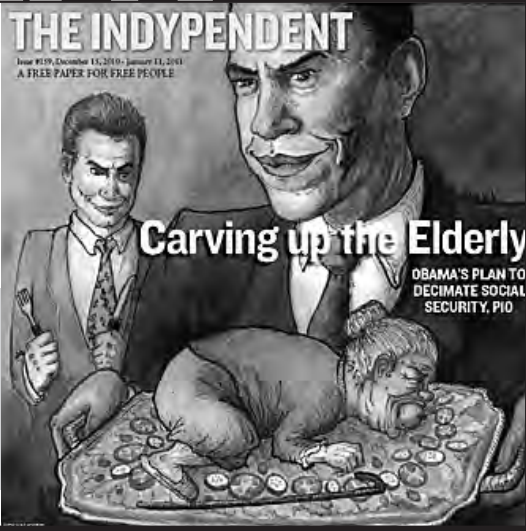


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# FINDING LIGHT IN DARK TIMES

BY ALEX KANE

**B**IL'IN, West Bank — Tear gas burned my eyes and throat, and I ran for cover. Moments before, more than 15 of us from a solidarity delegation organized by American Jews for a Just Peace had been protesting Israel's illegal separation barrier that confiscates Palestinian land. It was Jan. 7, a week after U.S.-made tear gas had killed Jawaher Abu Rahmah, a 36-year-old woman from the same village. Not to be deterred by Israeli military checkpoints and

Tel Aviv is another story. Far from Israel's border towns near Gaza, where people are often reminded that Palestinians exist in the form of crude homemade rockets that do little damage, Israel's capital is artificially idyllic. Israelis go about their daily lives, seemingly oblivious to the Palestinians living under the grinding boot of apartheid.

## HARDSHIP AND HOPE

Then there's Hebron, located in the southern West Bank, where more than 163,000 Palestinians are held hostage by 500 IDF-backed

passed a McCarthyist initiative to investigate leftist Israeli groups. And the documented massacre of more than 1,300 Palestinian civilians during Israel's 2008-09 siege has done little to deter talk of a renewed assault on Gaza.

Despair and heartbreak are commonplace among the Palestinians I met. And yet, in the words and actions of Palestinians like Omar Barghouti, a leader in the Palestinian-led boycott, divestment and sanctions movement, there is reason for hope. It's a sentiment echoed by Allam Jarrar, director



**REFUSING TO BE SILENT:** Soubhiya Abu Rahmah stands outside her home next to posters commemorating the deaths of her son and daughter. Bassem and Jawaher Abu Rahmah were both killed by the Israeli military while demonstrating against the separation barrier that illegally confiscates land in their village. PHOTO: Alex Kane

roadblocks around Bil'in, more than 100 Israelis, Palestinians and internationals participated in the demonstration against the barrier. Jawaher was on everyone's minds, and demonstrators held up posters with the words "gas won't tear us apart" written above photos of her face.

## DIFFERENT WORLDS

Just an hour before, I had been sitting in my hotel room in Ramallah. The landscape of Israel/Palestine, profoundly compact, boggles the mind. Different universes, ranging from siege and hardship to a bubble of normalcy and hope, exist simultaneously.

Ramallah, the effective capital of the West Bank, continues to be the exception to the Palestinian experience with its flourishing cafes and bars that cater to foreign businessmen and aid workers — and the Palestinians who benefit from these travelers.

It also currently serves as the administrative capital for the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, which has grown into an increasingly repressive governing apparatus. Reminders of Palestinian resistance are confined to posters of the late leader Yasser Arafat.

Israeli settlers. I stayed with a large Palestinian family there and witnessed what is often considered the flashpoint of the most intense of Israeli-Palestinian relations. Surrounded by extremist settlers, the family was forced to build a wall around their house to protect themselves from almost weekly attacks. One of my hosts, a woman in her 20s, told me that a few years ago a group of settlers hit her in the head with a rock, knocking her unconscious. Israeli checkpoints prevented the Palestinian ambulance from reaching her for two and a half hours. Her vision was impaired for months after the incident.

The Hebron settlers are mostly followers of the assassinated anti-Arab leader Rabbi Meir Kahane, who advocated the expulsion of the Palestinians. While they are by far the most extreme (and perhaps the smallest) faction of settlers, they have a disproportionate amount of Israel's support, despite the protestation of many left-wing Israeli activists who consider them fascists.

Israel's foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman, is an illegal settler who openly calls for Palestinian citizens to be transferred out of Israel. Last January, the Israeli Knesset

of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society who said, "in every dark situation there is a tiny light."

Two weeks after Jawaher's death, I had the chance to interview her mother, Soubhiya. She recalled the nearly identical death of her son, Bassem, an integral part of Bil'in's resistance to the apartheid wall. In April 2009 the IDF shot a high velocity tear-gas canister directly at Bassem's chest.

I asked her whether she still thought it was worth protesting after two of her children died as a result.

"Yes, for sure," she answered. "When the army keeps doing this stuff, and the Israeli government steals more land, yes, for sure I support this and everybody has to do something against them. We have never stopped. We will not be silent about this."

*Alex Kane is a blogger and journalist based in New York City. He blogs on Israel/Palestine and Islamophobia in the U.S. at alexbkane.wordpress.com, where this post originally appeared. Follow him on Twitter @alexbkane.*

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# All Fracked Up

“FRACKING: Art and Activism Against the Drill”

EXIT ART  
THROUGH FEB. 5

Alice Zinnes’ *What We Will Be When We Are Not* doesn’t really look like a political painting. Inspired by the landscape surrounding Zinnes’ studio in rural Northeastern Pennsylvania, it’s an abstract, brooding piece featuring a dark, muted palette. Zinnes’ painting captures the impact of one of the most serious environmental threats facing the Northeast — hydraulic fracturing.

This drilling practice, which involves breaking apart subterranean rock by pumping chemical-laced water into the earth to extract natural gas, is the subject of “Fracking: Art and Activism Against the Drill” — a small, dense exhibition in Exit Art’s basement gallery. The show is a project of SEA, a unique effort that assembles artists, activists and scholars to address social and environmental concerns.

Intended to illustrate the grave environmental ramifications of fracking (which include polluted water, increased cancer rates and dead wildlife), this is an appreciably

modest, homespun show. There are posters with statistics, bare-bones documentary videos, political cartoons and other pointedly polemical pieces; but the marrow of the exhibit is in the little things — the small, friendly works of art, mainly by artists who seem to have found a communality with nature and take threats to the environment personally. Zinnes’ painting is one example; there’s also Rifka Miller’s chunky blue-green river painting and Paul Lloyd Sargent’s upstate New York snapshots. Robin Jane Solvang presents a tiny color photo of a fire alarm with an associated artist’s statement on the dangers of fracking — the statement takes up more wall space than the photo. There are simple digital collages and poems tacked to the wall. There are also postcards contributed by the public, featuring original artwork on one side, and a written statement about fracking on the other. Perhaps the most ostentatious yet understated work is Linda DiGusta’s small drawing of a fish, with the line “Fracking kills fish and it will kill us, too,” written on the artist’s statement next to the piece.

In the end, it’s hard to sum up the impact of this exhibit. It doesn’t feel like a beacon or like a catalog of activist approaches, and it’s



CREDIT: EXIT ART

**DON'T DRINK THE WATER:** Artists and activists call attention to the environmental destruction caused by fracking in one of Exit Art’s current exhibits.

not quite a battle cry, either. It’s more like an honest, insistent voice of concern. While fracking poses a serious threat to the entire

planet, the consequences can be as real — and as small — as your own backyard.

— MIKE NEWTON

## Austerity

*Continued from page 6*

taxes on more affluent Americans. This is likely to hurt localities. How? Localities and local authorities — schools, utilities, transit systems, water works — raise money for projects by selling bonds to investors in the municipal bond markets. The income from these bonds is usually tax exempt. The higher the investor’s tax rate, the more appealing municipal bonds usually are. Cutting the tax rate on higher income earners lowers the appeal of municipal bonds. Also, a federal stimulus program has been subsidizing the interest cost of local bond issuers, but is set to expire after 2011. All of this is increasing fears of rising municipal defaults or attempts to renegotiate their debts over the next year.

As states and localities reduce spending and employment, education and basic social services are likely to suffer the lion’s share of pain. At-risk communities are already suffering from weak labor markets, low wages and the end of unemployment benefits. To this we will add a shrinking pool of opportunity for secure jobs with good benefits in state and local employment. Public sector unions will likely be weakened. There is a big fight brewing over public sector pension benefits. And there will be contentious and dramatic suggestions for social spending cuts as Congress is required to debate and vote on raising the national debt ceiling.

We now run the risk that as 2010 closed with tax cuts heavily benefiting the most affluent, 2011 will begin with service, education and employment cuts falling hardest on the least affluent.

## Balancing Act

*Continued from page 6*

policy intended to foster economic recovery. Without a recovery, these are just windfall profits.

In an April 2010 report (available at [fiscalpolicy.org](http://fiscalpolicy.org)), the Fiscal Policy Institute and the Center for Working Families advanced several proposals for how Wall Street could help the state’s finances recover from the financial-sector-induced Great Recession. Options include a temporary windfall profits tax, a bonus recapture tax, updating the taxation of financial firms (especially hedge funds), and a reduction in the stock transfer tax rebate.

New York’s corporate community benefits from several corporate tax loopholes and from excessively generous business tax breaks, also known as “tax expenditures,” that were enacted with the hope of promoting economic and job growth. FPI recently estimated that the state “spends” \$5 billion annually on a wide variety of business tax expenditures that lack accountability, transparency and effectiveness. Such programs should be closely examined for possible savings.

The job of closing New York’s yawning budget gaps over the last two years has been aided considerably by a temporary increase in personal income taxes on high-income earners. However, the temporary income tax increase is due to expire at the end of 2011. The surcharge — which raised the state’s top tax rate for married couples from 6.85 percent to 7.85 percent for income above \$300,000, and to 8.97 percent above \$500,000 — generates \$4–5 billion a year. It should be extended at least until state tax revenues recover from the recession.

Most of this surcharge is paid by the richest 1 percent of taxpayers, who have annual incomes over \$650,000. A recent FPI report documented that the top 1 percent increased their share of total income in New York from 10 percent in 1980 to 35 percent in 2007, a level of inequality far above the national average. Not surprisingly, New York

has the most polarized income of all states. New York City is the most polarized among the largest 25 cities.

The real issue with New York’s tax burden is its regressivity, not that its magnitude is constraining New York’s economic recovery. The state personal income tax is mildly progressive. Yet the highly regressive effects of the sales tax and local property taxes mean that New York’s overall combined state and local tax burden is regressive.

Thus, low- and middle-income families pay a higher share of their incomes in state and local taxes than the wealthiest families do. Even with the temporary surcharge, the wealthiest 1 percent of New York’s taxpayers paid 8.4 percent of their income in state and local taxes, while the middle income quintile or one-fifth of taxpayers paid 11.6 percent in state and local taxes, and the poorest one-fifth paid 9.6 percent.

### SPREAD THE WEALTH

To address this regressivity, and to deal with the growing concerns about burdensome local property taxes, New York State needs to rethink its tax structure and revamp the fiscal relations between the state and local governments. Several steps are needed:

- New York should significantly enhance the property tax circuit-breaker administered through the personal income tax to provide meaningful property tax relief to those households, including renters, truly burdened by high property taxation relative to their incomes.
- The state should aid communities with low property wealth and proportionately high Medicaid usage by increasing the state share of Medicaid costs in a way that takes a locality’s “ability to pay” into account.
- The state should establish a reasonable schedule for phasing in the additional funding needed by high-need/low-wealth school districts under the 2007 settlement of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit; and it should restore the state’s commitment to revenue-sharing with municipalities with significant service needs relative to their resources. These Medicaid, school aid and

revenue sharing steps will lessen pressure on the property tax in those communities that have limited property tax bases relative to their service responsibilities.

- The STAR program, which currently provides property tax relief to homeowners but in a very ineffective manner, should be reduced to help fund the expanded circuit-breaker and provide Medicaid relief to poorer communities.
- New York State should make its personal income tax structure more progressive through higher rates at the top. Before the enactment of the 2009–2011 temporary income tax surcharge, New York families with \$50,000 in taxable income paid the same marginal tax rate as families with \$500,000 in income — or even \$50 million.
- Wall Street should contribute to addressing the state’s financial problems that were exacerbated by the finance-induced recession — for example through a windfall profits or bonus recapture tax, or by taxing the hedge-fund profits of non-residents.
- Finally, the state should seek to close corporate tax loopholes and excessive growth in the cost of business tax breaks.

A balanced approach to balancing the state budget includes identifying additional revenues and not relying on cutting critical services at a time when need has been elevated by the lingering recession. Government spending is inextricably tied to prospects for economic recovery. Steep cuts will worsen unemployment. Public spending in areas such as K-12 education, public higher education, healthcare and infrastructure is needed to help get the economy moving again.

Public investments in our collective physical and human capital will enhance both the recovery and our long-term productivity. New York needs a smart approach to our fiscal problems — and that means thinking beyond a list of budget cuts.

James Parrott is the executive director of the Fiscal Policy Institute ([fiscalpolicy.org](http://fiscalpolicy.org)). An earlier version of this article appeared in Clarion, newspaper of the Professional Staff Congress ([psc-cuny.org](http://psc-cuny.org)).





The lobby of the Woolworth Building will be the starting point for this February's "Unbuilding New York" tour. CREDIT: lmcc.net

# School Yourself

Are you an urban explorer with an academic bent? Then discover **ACCESS RESTRICTED**, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's popular "nomadic lecture series," which starts up at the end of January. Entering its fourth year, this year's installment, *Lower Manhattan Revealed*, will focus on downtown Manhattan and explore "significant cultural phenomena from the recent history of Lower Manhattan as well as its more deeply rooted past."

Locations for the six-part lecture series include Pershing Hall on Governor's Island, the former AT&T building and 7 World Trade Center. In the past, they've scoured restricted buildings such as the New York State Supreme Court and the Bank of New York Building, with topics ranging from intellectual property to the informal economy.

"Unbuilding New York," part three of *Lower Manhattan Revealed*, will take place Feb. 9 in the Woolworth building. Michael Sorkin, principal of the Michael Sorkin Studio and distinguished professor of architecture at City College of New York, and Jeff Byles, journalist and author of *Rubble: Unearthing the History of Demolition*, will discuss the impact of the past decade's building boom and bust on downtown Manhattan. All lectures are free, but a reservation is required.



Deb Olin Unferth, author of *Revolution*, will be speaking at powerHouse Books on Feb. 2. CREDIT: wesleyan.edu.

On Feb. 2, stop by **POWERHOUSE BOOKS** for the launch of Deb Olin Unferth's *Revolution: The Year I Fell in Love and Went to Join the War*. Intriguing excerpts of the memoir have appeared in *Harper's Magazine* and *The Believer*. Expect a breathless rendition of the year she ran away from college with her boyfriend and followed him to Nicaragua to join the Sandinistas. *Believer* co-editor Heidi Julavits joins Unferth for a discussion of her experience.

Also on Feb. 2, the collaborative learning project **TRADE SCHOOL** will reopen for its second year in downtown Manhattan. Ini-

tially a pop-up storefront that sprung out of the barter network OurGoods, Trade School offers a series of classes that you don't have to pay for (not in cash, at least). Instead, the individual teachers list items they need or want as the price of admission. A random sampling of classes from last year includes "How To Throw an Arts Festival for 1-3 days," "Grant Writing," and "Grassroots Community Organizing Basics." Some items requested by the teachers: wool socks, a one-and-a-half-hour German lesson, small drill bits and vegetarian recipes. Food is very popular, both as a class topic and an object of barter.

When it first opened for one month in February 2009, Trade School turned out to be so popular that many classes were filled to capacity. In response, the organizers extended the session; this year's Trade School will be open from Feb. 2 to April 17 (and possibly longer if they're able to raise additional rent money).

"I'm excited to see what New Yorkers are enthusiastic about right now," Caroline Woolard, one of the group's five founders, told me, in an email, "We hope to bring in more people who might continue the project in years to come."

Woolard hopes that Trade School could become a long-term, even permanent project — either by opening yearly, or eventually staying open year-round.

— IRINA IVANOVA

## GETTING THERE:

For information on *Access Restricted* and to reserve a spot, visit [lmcc.net/cultural\\_programs/access\\_restricted](http://lmcc.net/cultural_programs/access_restricted).

The Powerhouse Arena is located at 37 Main St, Brooklyn. Call 718-666-3049 or visit [powerhousearena.com/events](http://powerhousearena.com/events).

Trade School will be located at 32 Prince St, New York. Visit [tradeschool.ourgoods.org](http://tradeschool.ourgoods.org) to peruse last year's classes and to sign up to take — or teach — a class.



Classes at Trade School, which opened in 2009, allow students to barter for instruction. CREDIT: [tradeschool.ourgoods.org](http://tradeschool.ourgoods.org)



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# The History of a Dream

NICHOLAS POWERS IMAGINES A HISTORY OF THE PAST TWO YEARS IN WHICH THE PEOPLE WHO WORKED FOR OBAMA'S ELECTION WENT ON TO BUILD THEIR OWN MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

"FOX NEWS HAS BLOOD ON ITS HANDS." The banner lifted in the breeze as red paint streamed down the building. An NBC reporter nodded to the cameraman, "We're standing next to the FOX News building, doused in red paint. The second attack on the news organization, the first, a cyber-attack..."

Police cars drove up as the reporter held a finger to her ear. "We're getting word a video has been released," she hustled to the news van, the screen was black then Glenn Beck hollers, "Progressives are putting a gun to America's head. Hold these people responsible!" On screen a bearded man wearing combat fatigues walked into a cluttered office. In the grainy footage he aimed two 9mm handguns, people fell, blood pooled the carpet like ink and a ghostly sentence appears, "We of the New Wave Movement mourn our lost friends. Please join us in protesting Right Wing violence."

In Brooklyn, Lionel closed his laptop showing the New Wave video. Holding his cell phone, he opened the closet. "I'm trying to find what to wear to the rally. Che Guevara shirt? No too college. RCP shirt? No, the Trotskyites will lynch me. The Saudi Sheik costume from Halloween?"

A pale, knotted hair woman ambled to the bathroom, rubbing sleep out of her eyes, "Jesus you're worse than me. Princess it's a protest not *Project Runway*."

He shot her a look and returned to his call. "No it's Julie, my anarchist guest who has slept on the couch the past week!" She laughed from behind the bathroom door, "I nationalized your couch in the name of the people."

Lionel shut the closet, "I'll meet you at the bar. Yes, I'll make sure no one's following me." He snapped his phone shut and looked around the apartment; protest signs stacked on the radiator, a gas mask on the table next to dumpster-dived bagels. For the past two weeks he let New Wave activists sleep on his floor, but the dumpster-diving was too much. He sniffed a bagel. "Stop being bourgeois and eat it," Julie left the bathroom, hair still knotted, but bright

and awake. She munched it near his face, crumbs falling from her mouth and laughing he waved his hands, "I hope they arrest you tomorrow."

"Who was that," she asked. He sighed, "Remember Rachel?" Julie arched her mouth, "Haven't heard from her in a year. Still the hush-hush underground revolutionary is she?" He shrugged his shoulders, "Every time she calls it's from a different number."

In the street Lionel walked fast and blind, thinking of the 700,000 people who came to rally against Wall Street. Not just activists and students feverish with vision but workers hungry for work, retirees angry at lost pensions. In everyone's eyes he saw rage and hope and in that red-tint, Wall Street seemed a huge citadel of cracked glass that hundreds of thousands of people wanted to smash into shards.

Lionel slipped by men laughing on the corner, remembering the euphoria of

Obama's face on Mickey.

It went viral and millions of people saw it. Cable pundits ran with the analogy that Obama lost control of his voters. "When is he going to come in like the Wizard and stop them," asked CNN's Wolf Blitzer. "It's an unstoppable wave." The name stuck and list members called themselves The New Wave.

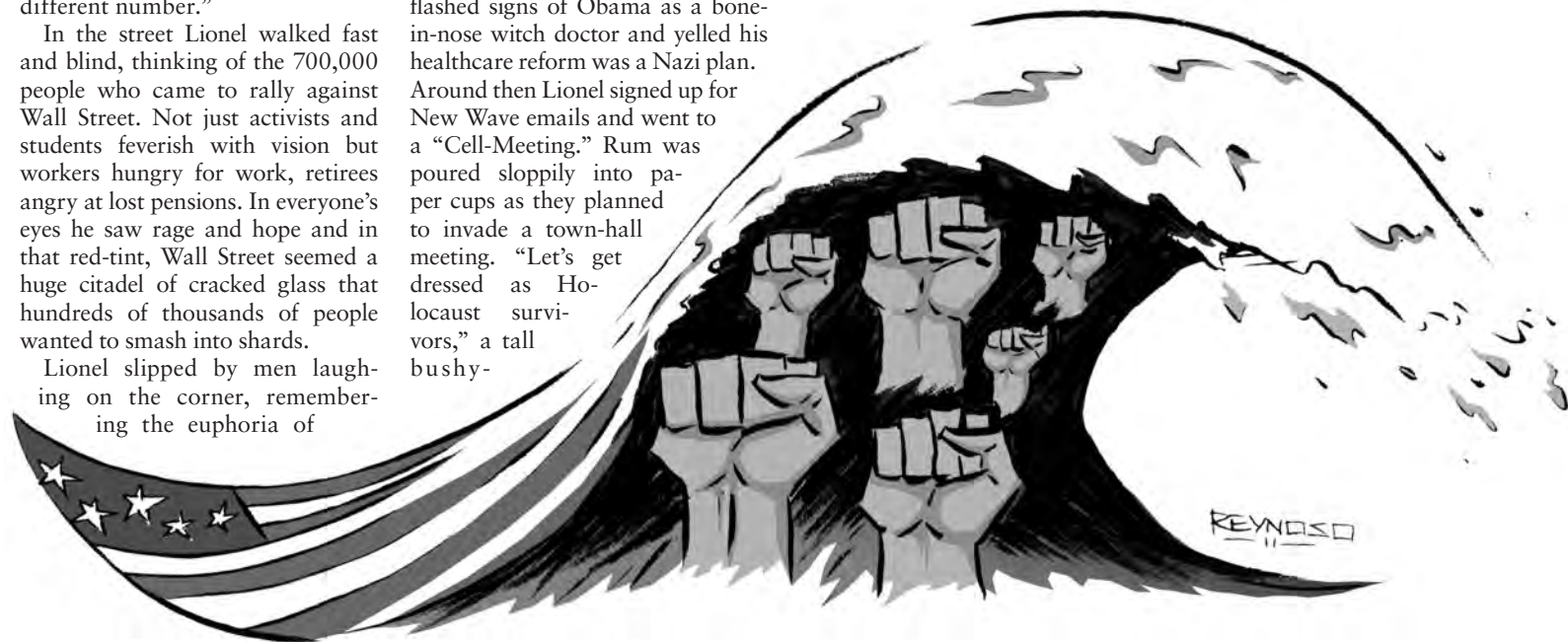
In summer 2009, the Tea Party flashed signs of Obama as a bone-in-nose witch doctor and yelled his healthcare reform was a Nazi plan. Around then Lionel signed up for New Wave emails and went to a "Cell-Meeting." Rum was poured sloppily into paper cups as they planned to invade a town-hall meeting. "Let's get dressed as Holocaust survivors," a tall bushy-

gle-payer system. In one debate, Lionel's friend brought his elderly grandfather who was a Holocaust survivor and, hobbling on a cane, went up to a Tea Partier with an Obama as Hitler poster, tore it out of his hands and ripped it in half. "I fought against Nazis," he shouted. "And I know a Nazi when I see one." He pointed his finger at the man's heart as if to show the hate seeping up from it like a geyser.

The New Wave Movement wore zombie make-up and filled health-insurance offices, they mocked CEOs by throwing Monopoly money on their lawns; they marched, debated, made art, music, posters and the idea of a single-payer system rose in the polls like

he slurred, "I got the Public Option. You can't kill me."

On talk-shows, pundits worried the Democrats were being pulled Left. "It's an illegal movement of digital bandits hijacking politics," Charles Krauthammer said on FOX. The evening news showed New Wave activists hauling an evicted family's furniture through the front door to the rooms inside. "The police just left," a woman said, "and these kind young people moved me back in." She hoisted her baby on her shoulder, wiping tears and in a wobbly voice said, "I would have no wheres to sleep, no wheres to be safe." In the last shot, a young woman with a bandanna sat with her friends on the



Obama's election. How it ebbed as the White House filled banks with money while sheriffs foreclosed homes and families wept on their front lawns. How the cyber-activist group Oz hacked the database of the Obama campaign and stole its 13 million email addresses. Instantly emails pulsed back and forth through the deflated movement, revitalizing it. On TV, Democrats threatened to prosecute. In retaliation, Oz took the scene from *Fantasia* where Mickey Mouse cast a spell on brooms but lost control as they dumped buckets of water into a well and superimposed

bearded man said, "If they're going to use this Nazi analogy let's make it look dumb." The glances around the room shot that idea down. "Does anyone know someone who's sick." Lionel asked into the sudden quiet. "My aunt has breast cancer."

Their eyes seemed to stare inward to a father, a sibling, a mom or aunt who was hurt and alone and forgotten. It was as if that person found their way into that room and stood with them, waiting to be called. The idea spread, in a week New Wave activists were wheeling in their wounded relatives to the debates and demanding a sin-

a hot thermometer. They pushed a healthcare bill with a public option, cheap imported drugs, lower threshold for Medicare and a six-month start date through the Senate on a reconciliation vote. Obama appeared on TV, flashing that saber-like smile that was always too tense to be sincere. The Democrats were nervous because a tidal wave of public passion was looming over their heads.

Lionel remembered getting drunk that night and play-fighting with his friends, pretending to break each other's bones and cough Ebola virus on each other. "It's all good man,"

lawn as they warmed their hands over a fire. The flames leapt and twisted in her eyes, "Every human being has a right to a home," she said. "No amount of math tricks by bankers will take that away from us."

New Wave offices opened in cities and towns. Organizers jokingly called it Extreme Make Over: Nation Edition and organized Detroit, Pittsburgh and Oakland to socialize abandoned houses. Families wept as activists reopened locked doors. A tall woman with an Afro glistening like a halo, sweaty from hauling furniture



back into a home said, “Conservatives define freedom as the ability to choose in the free market, but how can you choose if you’re too poor to afford housing or food or medicine? People must be free of poverty first.” She forearmed her brow and went back to lifting a sofa. As news cameras rolled, police cruisers pulled up, cops handcuffed them and Aifa was pushed into the backseat.

The White House was flooded with calls, letters, emails and petitions. A vigil was held in front, candles flickering light on Aifa’s face. New Wave activists cajoled President Obama to visit the tent cities built by the homeless and unemployed. They demanded he pardon Aifa and to sign a law that stopped foreclosures. They demanded a Green Deal, a tax on the banks to fund a work program for the people.

Afraid, isolated and losing credibility the White House scheduled a media blitz of a tent city. Obama waded through the shivering poor, who stared at the Secret Service that circled him like silent shadows. He shook hands, leaned into crinkly tents but his eyes were like calculators measuring the effect on his image.

Network cameras followed him, magnifying every touch into an iconic image of healing or betrayal. “Can America afford to care about the poor,” asked Wolf Blitzer. “Communists are taking over the country! The final war has begun,” shouted Glenn Beck. But the New Wave movement delivered its message directly by filming itself as it stopped foreclosures and directed massive sit-ins at banks. They demanded breaking up Wall Street firms. They called for workers’ councils to replace investors at companies that received public money. Youth around the world mirrored them, and TVs showed students in banks, singing as police hauled them away. In Italy, spirals of tear gas clouded the street as two students were shot, bodies like bloody dolls carried by friends.

The jailed organizer Aifa was released and reporters asked her if the New Wave Movement was responsible for the violence. She said, “The ruling elite attacked the people; starving them, abandoning them in poverty. We can stop the violence with a simple solution: Build the future now!” Those four words were multiplied by a million mouths into a global chant, “Build the Future Now!”

Obama replaced his top economic adviser Larry Summers with Paul Krugman. In a speech from the Oval Office, he called for banks to be taxed billions to fund a massive work program for the people. It would be a Green Deal, money to build recycling plants, money to build new energy grids.

“We’ve reached a turning point where the discontent of the young and unemployed can no longer be ignored and neither can the justice of their claims.”

The stock market plunged a thousand points and the next day, another thousand. Pensions evaporated. Panicked crowds banged on bank doors. Savings vanished. Terror descended like blindness into the world. Cable pundits blamed the New Wave Movement and Obama appeared on TV, “We are on the edge of a cliff and must pull back. We cannot afford chaos in our banks or in the streets. The movement must be put on hold.”

The next day a Glenn Beck fan, wearing combat fatigues walked into a New Wave office and opened fire. He killed seven people before police shot him. At the office, thousands held candles near photos of those killed. Aifa held one of a young man with cornrowed hair and a wide smile, “He was my brother.” She breathed slow, “He joined because he saw his big sister in it. When the death threats began, I told him to leave,”

dreds of thousands of people poured in to protest. Obama was on TV, “We will have law and order by any means necessary.”

Lionel snapped out of his daydream when two police walked by. Hands sweaty, he rubbed them on his pants and saw Rachel inside the bar. Her face was a blazing smile, they hugged.

“Jesus you’re sweaty,” she pinched him.

“I got something for you,” Lionel said and pulled out a bagel. “Dumpster-dived.” She shook her head, “You are so nasty.” He mimed biting it and they laughed. As they ordered beers, Lionel studied the care-lines deepening her eyes, her lip chewed from worry.

“Tomorrow is the big day,” she said and put a digital camera on the table. “Tea Party types are going to cause trouble.” On its mini-screen was a recent protest where a man swung a pipe, rocking the head of a demonstrator who blinked at each strike as if his thoughts were broken by the pounding. “Jesus...” Lionel whispered.

“You think tomorrow is a big

The evening news showed New Wave activists hauling an evicted family’s furniture through the front door to the rooms inside. ‘The police just left,’ a woman said, ‘and these kind young people moved me back in.’

She looked into the camera, into the eyes of the world. “He said, ‘I can’t abandon the people. I’m everyone’s brother.’”

Weeks later, WikiLeaks published private emails of bankers joking about the shooting. “Why did he have to be such a poor shot,” read one. “This crash just ended that Green Deal Communist shit.” Another one read, “The peasants can kiss their pensions goodbye.” The emails were a spark sizzling into public grief and the streets exploded. Lionel remembered throwing his first brick, how the rage churning inside him flowed into its weight and how it flew like a comet. The glass shattered in a web, then broke into a dark jagged hole, and his face slid across the shards that fell in slow motion. It was as if he lived outside time and then the roar in his head focused into sharp yells and he was running again.

A call to mobilize against Wall Street went out and barricades were set up in dozens of capitals around the world, but the nation’s collective eye turned to Manhattan as hun-

dered march like 1963,” she looked at the door. “But it’s not symbolic. We want to stop Wall Street from crashing America.”

“So do I Rachel,” he said loudly. “Really,” she smirked. “What are you wearing tomorrow, the Che shirt?” A momentary pause and they laughed knowingly, “Just be our eyes.” She pinned a button on his collar and gave him the camera. Lionel could see her through the button, it was a secret lens. “They bring weapons and we bring Hollywood?”

“We have to shame them,” she said. “And get killed like those kids in Italy,” he was angry at her, at himself, but she took the bagel. He wanted to say something ironic like, “Is this our Last Supper?” but she fed him bits of dumpster-dived bagel and tilted beer to his mouth. Through the camera, Lionel saw in her face the long highways and nighttime fires, the hopeless loving and bread broken with strangers. He saw everything good in his life, everything holy and pressed Record.

“A passion t , utifully writt n work th t  
l r i f i s , i n f o r m s , n l l s f o r t i o n .”  
— OXANNE UNBAR- RTIZ  
“A r i l s h o l r ’ s g u i t o r i l  
x i o n w l l w o r t h t h r .”  
— AN A BOTZ

# MEXICO'S REVOLUTION THEN & NOW

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# We Support the *Democratic Revolution* in Tunisia

STATEMENT BY THE CAMPAIGN FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

**W**e express our solidarity with the Tunisian people in their struggle against a repressive and corrupt regime.

Unemployed youth, students, trade unionists, lawyers, and the full range of opposition parties, in the cities and in the rural areas, have taken to the streets and — for the first time in the Arab world — ousted a dictator.

Tunisia has always had just the façade of democracy. Its ruling party won every seat in the parliament in 1989, and every directly elected seat in the 1994, 1999, and 2004 elections. President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali had been in office since 1987, when he deposed the previous autocrat, Habib Bourguiba. Ben Ali abolished the position of “president for life,” but then ran unopposed for president in 1989 and 1994, and got 99.44 percent of the vote in 1999, 94.5 percent in 2004, and, running against three opponents, 89.6 percent in 2009.

The U.S. government’s annual human rights report summarized the situation in Tunisia this way:

*“There were significant limitations on citizens’ right to change their government. Local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) reported that security forces tortured and physically abused prisoners and detainees and arbitrarily arrested and detained individuals. Security forces acted with impunity, sanctioned by high-ranking officials. There were also reports of lengthy pretrial and incommunicado detention. Government imposition of severe restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, and association worsened in the lead-up to the October [2009] elections. The government remained intolerant of public criticism, and there were widespread reports that it used intimidation, criminal investigations, the judicial system, arbitrary arrests, residential restrictions, and travel controls to discourage criticism.”*

Tunisia ranked number 154 out of 173 countries in the 2009 Reporters Without Borders list of World Press Freedom rankings, down from 143 in the previous year. OpenNet Initiative found that the Tunisian government engaged in “pervasive” filtering of political and social internet sites, using U.S.-made software.

Corruption by the president and his inner circle was notorious. The U.S. Embassy reported, in a cable released by WikiLeaks, that “one Tunisian lamented that Tunisia was no longer a police state, it had become a state run by the mafia.” Commented the U.S. Ambassador in a secret cable: “Whether it’s cash, services, land, property, or yes, even your yacht, President Ben Ali’s family is rumored to covet it and reportedly gets what it wants.”

While political insiders have been living in luxury, life is hard for the vast majority of Tunisians. In 2005 46 percent of young college graduates did not have a job 18 months after graduation; nearly 50 percent of Masters graduates and graduates with advanced technician diplomas were unemployed. And in response to pressure from the IMF and the World Bank, government subsidies continue to be reduced or eliminated from food and gasoline, squeezing even those who have jobs.

Despite Tunisia’s record of repression, Washington has long had “very good relations” (in the words of the State Department’s Background notes) with the country. The two nations have “an active schedule of joint military exercises.” Tunisia is one of only five countries (the others being Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Colombia) that receive direct U.S. military aid. In fact, as recently as December 2010, when the uprising against Ben Ali was already building, Congress authorized \$12 million in “security assistance” to the Ben Ali dictatorship.

On January 11 of this year, as demonstrations raged in the country and the regime responded with lethal repression, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared that the United States “was not taking sides.” And the French foreign minister suggested that French police forces could help police in Tunisia “appease the situation through law enforcement techniques.” Only after Ben Ali fled the country did the White House, on January 14, finally condemn the violence against peaceful demonstrators. Until then, support of the Tunisian government was justified on the grounds that it was a “partner against terrorism” and a “moderate” Arab voice that did not join the Arab consensus against Israel’s oppression of Palestinians.

We call on Washington and Paris, the two major props of the regime, to keep their hands off Tunisia, allowing the Tunisian people to establish a society that provides full democratic rights and social justice. We demand that the Tunisian security forces end all acts of repression, and we oppose any sort of military takeover. There must be no interference with the right of Tunisians to create a new civilian government through free and fair elections involving all political parties. In addition, we call for an end to IMF/World Bank pressure on Tunisia to reduce food and gasoline subsidies. Such policies are typically characterized by the U.S. as “reforms,” but they only deepen the misery of the Tunisian people.

Whether the toppling of the dictator will lead to fundamental changes in Tunisia remains to be seen. But there is no doubt that U.S.-backed autocrats throughout the Middle East ought to be very worried. May this be an inspiration for people seeking real democracy everywhere, from Egypt to Jordan to Saudi Arabia ... to the United States.



*A woman holds sign in protest of Tunisian President Ben Ali during a demonstration near Tunisia’s embassy in Paris. AllVoices.com*



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